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ABSTRACT

Two eminent women theorists have been especially instrumental in creating a feminine rhetoric which is process-oriented, relational, integrated and collaborative. Janet Emig may rightly be considered as one of the key researchers responsible for the paradigm shift in composition studies and practice. The fundamental assumptions the field has developed over the past 20 years are rooted in her rhetoric of process and community. It was Emig who first called for the abandonment of the product as the primary interest and for the encouragement of a process writing teachers can initiate through imagination and sustain through empathy and support. Emig also called for a community of writers where teachers write along with their students. Another important contributor to the new rhetoric is Andrea Lunsford, who has presented a dialogic or polyphonal model of communication based on the phenomenon of collaboration. Lunsford argues that learning occurs as part of an interaction, either between the learner and the environment or, more frequently, between the learner and peers. Participants in the dialogic collaborative mode capitalize on the creative tension inherent in multi-voiced rhetorical ventures, whereas multiple voices are seen as a problem in the hierarchical mode of the traditional rhetorical paradigm. Both Emig and Lunsford are reinventing the rhetorical tradition, creating a rhetoric of process and integration, of community and collaboration. (KEH)

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The Feminine Rhetorics of Janet Emig and Andrea Lunsford

I'm teaching an honors seminar in contemporary fiction this semester. When I told the students I'd be missing our class to give this presentation, they began to speculate about my title.

"By 'Feminine rhetoric,' do you mean watered-down, or weak, submissive rhetoric?"

"No, it probably means a softer approach, more subtle persuasion."

"What about a frilly, decorated style of Rhetoric?"

These bright students, in nearly knee-jerk fashion, provided and applied all the female stereotypes, or so I thought.

After class, I ran into a colleague specializing in 18th century literature and mentioned my upcoming presentation. "Is this another feminist gimmick, or do you mean to suggest there's a whiney, neurotic and pre-menstrual rhetoric out there?" I suppose these reactions shouldn't be unexpected. They illustrate that feminist theory is still little understood and that "rhetoric" is still suspect. In fact, it is only in the late eighties that we begin to see evidence of feminist theory being applied to the study of rhetoric. Women in the academy have long known the advantages of adopting masculine postures in their work and the theories they develop, but there is compelling evidence that certain contemporary rhetorics are markedly feminine. The

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feminist theory of Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan offer us a framework for analyzing the work of these contemporary rhetoricians. What we discover is a new rhetoric, a feminine rhetoric that defies the negative female stereotypes and redefines the whole of contemporary rhetorical theory.

In Chodorow's book The Reproduction of Mothering and Gilligan's In a Different Voice, various male and female behaviors, attitudes, cognitive styles and developmental processes are analyzed and classified. These feminist theorists agree that men and women have different conceptions of self and different modes of interaction with others as a result of their different experiences--especially their relationships with their primary parents, their mothers.

Chodorow says girls and boys develop different relational capacities as a result of growing up in families in which women mother. A girl's gender role identification processes "are more continuously embedded in and mediated by her ongoing relationship with her mother" (176). A boy, on the other hand, gives up his attachment to his mother and his primary identification with her. Feminine identification processes are relational, whereas masculine identification processes deny relationship.

Gilligan differentiates men's and women's thinking about ethical issues with two metaphors: the web and the ladder. Women define morality in terms of conflicting responsibilities, men in terms of competing rights. Men equate morality with

fairness, and link moral development to the understanding of rights and rules. Women operate in a web, and seek to cultivate relationships in their thinking and to demonstrate the interconnectedness of issues. Men operate on a ladder, demonstrating achievement orientation and hierarchical thinking.

Both Chodorow and Gilligan's research suggests that men and women differ in their relational capacities and in their moral and intellectual development. In general, women tend toward relational, integrated, inclusive behaviors and attitudes, while men exhibit hierarchical, segregated and exclusive behaviors and attitudes. Similarly, in their purest forms, androcentric rhetorics tend to be rule-governed, hierarchical, product-centered and victory oriented. Feminine rhetorics stress the interrelatedness of arguments, the process of developing them, and growth or synthesis rather than winning.

In 1988, Elizabeth Flynn described current composition studies as a feminization of our previous conceptions of how writers write and how writing should be taught ("Composing as a Woman"). Flynn argues that the process approach to teaching writing is a feminine approach and that composition specialists replace the authoritative father with an image of a nurturing mother. Certainly composition foremothers like Emig, Shaughnessy, Flower, Hairston, Sommers, Lauer and Lunsford have altered our pedagogy; but these women are not "mere"

practitioners. Their collective research has contributed to a new theory of rhetoric as well.

Let's take a closer look at two of these eminent women theorists to determine just how their rhetorics are feminine: process-oriented, relational, integrated and collaborative.

Janet Emig's landmark study, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, revolutionized composition theory and practice. Her ethnographic case study of eight student writers provided evidence that composing should be viewed as a process, that students (and their teachers) should write frequently and in a variety of modes, and that pointing out errors in writing products is a futile, neurotic activity.

Along with James Britton, we may rightly consider Emig the one of the key researchers responsible for the paradigm shift in composition studies and practice. The fundamental assumptions we have developed over the past 20 years are rooted in her rhetoric --a rhetoric of process and community. It was Emig who first called for the abandonment our primary interest in products we can criticize and for the encouragement of a process we can help initiate through imagination and sustain through empathy and support. She also called for a community of writers where teachers write along with their students. Emig exposed the old model, the authoritative, teacher-centered presentation of composition for what it was--"pedagogically, developmentally and

politically an anachronism" (Composing Process of 12th Graders 100).

Emig has continued to espouse the feminine concepts of community and collaboration in her research and writing. In a recent festschrift for James Britton she commented:

> The United States has come late to believe in communities of inquiry . . . American graduate education emanated from a teutonic model, with the policies of tenure and promotion still rewarding solitary egos pursuing solitary tasks with solitary passion--preferably grimly. In this lone eagle approach to research, collaboration in too many American Universities still connotes the Second World War or, worse, an anti-capitalistic statement: however will we know what individual to reward singly if we don't know who precisely did what? But once, of course, a concept is embraced, it is embraced fervently.
> Now [collaborative] teacher-centered and teacher-directed research represent perhaps our liveliest branch of inquiry . . . the international community of inquiry into language learning and teaching . . . is now a banyan tree, with too many roots to be deracinated. Indeed, this community of inquiry may well become one of the most powerful forms of democratic action in the educational world. ("A Community of Inquiry: James Britton and Educational Research" 268-69)

Not only does Emig celebrate and espouse communities of inquiry, she is intent on fostering communities of writers writing. In her essay, "The Tacit Tradition: The Inevitability of a Multi-Disciplinary Approach to Writing Research," Emig composes a credo of the writing community:

> We believe that almost all persons can write and want to write; that not writing or not wanting to write is unnatural; that, if either occurs, something major has been subverted in a mind, in a life; that as teachers and researchers we must try to help make writing natural again, and necessary. Credo; credemus. And so may we continue together. (155)

Emig's unabashedly human-centered philosophy of composition points at joint intellectual effort--collaboration in theorizing and in practice. And she does practice what she preaches, involving students and colleagues in every stage of her research.

It's not surprising that Emig titled a collection of her essays The Web of Meaning. (This title comes from Vygotsky's famous observation that writing is elaborating the web of meaning.) Each of the essays in this collection is introduced by an informal dialogue between Emig and the book's editors, and Emig credits their three-way collaboration with "recreating" her writing.

In one of her most famous essays, "Writing as a Mode of Learning," Emig argues that "writing, through its inherent reinforcing cycle involving hand, eye and brain marks a uniquely powerful multi-representational mode for learning" (124-25). With this claim, Emig spearheaded a crucial line of inquiry profoundly affecting contemporary rhetoric. In fact, the Writing Across the Curriculum Movement has its roots in this writing-as-learning philosophy. In an interview Emig later commented that writing not only represents a unique mode of learning, but that "writing is the enabling medium: It makes possible getting certain work done in the world. Not only does it provide self-knowledge, but it's also one way of changing the world" (Rosen 12).

Emig's contributions to rhetoric and composition studies have changed those worlds. Her process-centered, collaborative theory and practice have contributed greatly to the new web-like, feminine rhetoric.

Another important contributor to the new rhetoric of the late twentieth century is Andrea Lunsford. In an 1984 essay she co-authored with Lisa Ede, "On Distinctions between Classical and Modern Rhetoric," they write that Aristotle's classical theory is revolutionary in that it establishes rhetoric as an art and relates it clearly to all fields of knowledge. By contrast, "despite the efforts of modern rhetoricians, we lack any such systematic theory to inform current practice." Lunsford and Ede argues that our age has seen a curious divorce between rhetorical theory and practice and an extreme fragmentation of our discipline . . . (While) much modern rhetorical "theory" argues that modern rhetoric is characterized by understanding, mutual sharing, and two-way communication, "twentieth-century rhetorical practice has surely reached now heights (or depths) of manipulative use of language" (48). While Lunsford and Ede drew a valid conclusion about rhetorical practice in the public sector, their own work in the rhetoric of composition theory and pedagogy has helped create a different situation.

In the Annotated Instructor's edition of the St. Martin's Handbook, Lunsford, again writing with Ede, urges teachers to let their students write together (I-17). They reject the notion

that "real writing" has to be an individual enterprise. They eschew Romantic notions about the relationship between inspiration, individual genius and authoring--the idea that "authority . . . most genuinely derives from a person's individual struggle to shape meaning through language" (I-17). Lunsford and Ede cite the research of Britton and Emig to counter the concept of authorship as inherently solitary, calling that perspective theoretically naive and pedagogically flawed. Rather learning occurs as part of an interaction, either between the learner and the environment or, more frequently, between the learner and peers.

Lunsford and Ede have worked together for several years on the phenomenon of collaboration, and Lunsford herself has collaborated with several others, including Bob Connors, Janice Lauer, Janet Emig, Cheryl Glenn, Helen Moglen, James Slevin, and Richard Lloyd-Jones. Throughout her career Lunsford has been fascinated by writing together, so it is not surprising that she does it so often. Like Emig, her research and practice are intimately interrelated.

Lunsford and her collaborator Ede propose a new rhetoric, a rhetoric that rejects what Toril Moi has called "the model of the author as God the father of the text" (Rhetoric in a New Key 1). This new rhetoric is a dialogic or polyphonal model of communication. They write that their interest in collaboration grew directly out of their "personal experience as long-time

friends and co-authors, piqued by [their] surprised realization that co-authorship was not valued in [their] own departments of English" ("Rhetoric in a New Key" 1). So Lunsford and Ede set out to demonstrate that collaborative writing is a feature of much contemporary discourse. Financed by the fund for the improvement of Post-Secondary Education, their project included a survey of 1400 randomly selected writers in seven different professional organizations, a second survey of 12 members of each organization and on-site interviews. They identified two modes of collaborative writing: a hierarchical mode, where the collaboration, goals and authority are carefully, even rigidly structured. In this mode, the lowest-paid, least-recognized members of the team perform most of the work yet get little credit or reward. In the second or dialogic mode, the mode Lunsford and Ede think of as primarily feminine, the collaborative roles are more loosely structured and fluid, and the process of articulating goals is an important as the goals themselves, sometimes even more important. This research is described in Lunsford and Ede's recent book Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing.

The dialogic mode is at the heart of the new Rhetoric Lunsford has helped describe. Participants in the dialogic collaborative mode capitalize on the creative tension inherent in multi-voiced rhetorical ventures. Hierarchical collaborators are really solitary voices thrown together, each struggling to

achieve primacy. Multiple voices are seen as a problem in the hierarchical mode, but in dialogic collaboration, the group effort is essential to the production of knowledge. Lunsford and Ede argue that this collaboration is potentially "deeply subversive. And because [their] respondents had no ready language with which to describe such an enterprise, and because most who tried to describe it to [them] were women, and because this mode of collaboration seemed so much the "other"--[they] thought of this mode as predominantly feminine" (Rhetoric in a New Key 4). The dialogic mode represents the possibility of subverting traditional phallogocentric discourse and challenges the univocal, authoritative text.

Singular Texts/Plural Authors includes a series of brief "Intertexts" or testimonials to the value of collaboration. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule in their book Women's Ways of Knowing provide a particularly moving example.

> In collaborating on writing this book we searched for a single voice--a way of submerging our individual perspectives for the sake of the collective "we." Not that we denied our individual convictions or squelched our objections to one another's points of view--we argued, tried to persuade, even cried at times when we reached an impasse of understanding--but we learned to listen to each other, build on each other's insights, and eventually arrive at a way of communicating as a collective what we believe. (Intertext)

Anecdotal evidence of the value of collaboration abounds, but it is through tracing the history of writing and a survey of collaborative writing theory in composition that Lunsford and Ede find evidence for a challenge to the myth of a solitary,

achievement-oriented rhetoric. They end their book by urging a fundamental change in our educational institutions to accommodate collaboration by radically resituating power in the classroom. They say, "Today and in the twenty-first century, our data suggest, writers must be able to work together . . . they must be able to collaborate" (Preface).

Emig and Lunsford do rhetoric differently. They and other "Feminine" rhetoricians--both men and women--are reinventing the rhetorical tradition, creating a rhetoric of process and integration, of community and collaboration. Because of their contributions, rhetoric can no longer be judged solely on the basis of achievement, authoritative weight and victory. And this new multivocal rhetoric, a feminine rhetoric, with its emphasis on relationship, growth, dialogue and collaboration will continue to animate our research, our pedagogy and our thinking, making them more dynamic, more egalitarian and ultimately, more productive.

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